

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

1 CORINTHIANS 13-14

You can live in Gainesville, Florida, and be a Georgia Bulldog fan - *it's dangerous, but it's possible...* You can consider yourself a card-carrying Democrat, yet at times vote for a Republican... You can be an employee at Lowes, yet on occasion shop at the Home Depot...

When such an event happens it's an anomaly - it's out of character - it's abnormal - but it's possible... And you can be Charismatic, exercise spiritual gifts, and be filled with the Holy Spirit - yet still be selfish and carnal.

Sadly, the Christians in Corinth were living proof...

1 Corinthians 12 is the great chapter on the body of Christ and spiritual gifts. 1 Corinthians 14 is the Bible's fullest explanation of the most controversial gifts: [prophecy](#), [speaking in tongues](#), and [interpretation](#).

And believers in Corinth excelled in such matters.

Yet sandwiched in between these two epic chapters, 12 and 14, 1 Corinthians 13, addresses what the Corinthians lacked. There was a short supply of love.

At the close of chapter 12 Paul encourages his readers to "[desire the best gifts.](#)" The gifts of the Spirit are good gifts. We all can benefit from spiritual gifts.

But these gifts are not the most important issue in church life. As Paul says, there is "[a more excellent way...](#)" *The greatest of God's gifts to the Body **is love!***

The Corinthian Christians were all about flaunting a gift - *rattling off in tongues and looking spiritual* - rather, than loving their brother. Love was an afterthought.

Paul tells them in verse 1.. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal."

In Chapter 14 Paul explains the purpose and value of the gift of tongues, but don't forget his words here - ***divine language without divine love is just noise.***

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing."

Special revelation and supernatural insight - even mountain moving faith - is futile compared to the power of love... You can have a juiced-up faith - *a faith strong enough to bench press Stone Mountain* - but it's worthless and fruitless, unless it's coupled with love.

Verse 3, "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing." *You can die a martyr's death - and make impressive sacrifices along the way* - yet without love all your efforts are futile.

Imagine having a martyr's courage. You travel to Iran, preach Jesus in the streets - you get beheaded.

But if your actions aren't motivated by love for Jesus, and love for people - then God remains unimpressed.

"Love suffers long..." I'll never forget an interview I heard years ago on Focus on the Family. James Dobson was interviewing a lady diagnosed with cancer.

She had been given a choice... One doctor had told her to live out the rest of her days on the beaches of Acapulco. Enjoy the life she had left... While another doctor told her she could undergo numerous rounds of grueling, brutal radiation and chemotherapy, with the slight hope of extending her life maybe 2 to 4 years.

She chose to extend her life, *if only for one day...*

She wrote to her three small children, "I've chosen to survive for you. And this has horrible costs, including pain, the loss of my good humor, and moods I won't be able to control. But I must try this, if only on the outside chance that I might live one minute longer. That minute could be the one in which you might need me when no one else will do. For this I intend to struggle, tooth and nail, so help me God." "Love suffers long..."

"And is kind..." Love isn't harsh or mean. It's tender.

"Love does not envy..." It never wants the blessing that God chooses for someone else. In other words, it reads the name tags on the gifts before it grabs them. And it's happy for the person who gets the nice gift...

"Love does not parade itself..." It doesn't show-off, or attract attention... And it's "not puffed up..." Love is humble. It doesn't mind picking up a towel and washing some dirty feet. *The purer the love the lessor the pride.*

As a father of four kids I picked four noses, I wiped four rumps, I cleaned the wax out of eight ears - and I can

honestly say I never once minded - *at least not the noses and ears*. Real love doesn't mind the dirty work!

And love **"does not behave rudely, does not seek its own..."** Love doesn't intend to embarrass anyone. It's always concerned for the feelings of the other guy.

In reminds me of a young bride-to-be who went to purchase material for her wedding dress. She asked for the noisiest material available. The clerk thought this was an odd request... *until the young girl explained...* **"My fiancé' is blind and I want him to hear when I reach the altar so he won't be embarrassed."**

Love **"is not provoked..."** Or as the NIV puts it, **"keeps no record of wrongs."** It doesn't hold grudges...

Love **"thinks no evil..."** It doesn't jump to negative conclusions. It always gives the benefit of the doubt.

Verse 6, Love **"does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails."**

Love is a powder-keg. Never give up on love!

Even when you tire of extending it - or frustrated over love's rejection - *just keep on loving!* Refuse to resort to lessor methods. Just keep loving people, and loving people, and loving people! For love never fails!

Verse 8, **"But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away."**

In eternity spiritual gifts will no longer be needed to compensate for our inadequacies...

We won't need **prophecy**. God will speak to us face to face... Or **tongues**, we'll be fluent in all languages... Or **words of knowledge**, we'll know all truth...

Spiritual gifts are for time - when we're faced with limitations. They're not for eternity. Verse 9 tells us, "**For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.**" And the "**perfect**" he's talking about is the perfection and completeness of eternity.

Of course, this is the verse the skeptics like to use to deny the perpetuity - or continuance - of spiritual gifts. They attempt to deny that spiritual gifts are for today.

They interpret "**that which is perfect** " as the NT. The Greek word translated "**perfect**" means "**complete.**"

Thus, non-Pentecostals conclude that when the NT canon was finalized, God pulled the gifts of the Spirit from circulation. The church no longer needed them.

I couldn't disagree more! For starters the NT was never considered a total revelation. In 2 Corinthians 12 Paul mentions seeing things in heaven that were not lawful for him to discuss - let alone write of in the NT.

The seven thunders of Revelation 10:4 were heard by John, but he was prohibited from recording them...

My point is "**that which is perfect**" doesn't refer to the NT, but to the perfection we'll all enjoy in heaven.

That's when spiritual gifts will cease - when we enter God's glory - then we'll no longer need these spiritual gifts. For now, spiritual gifts are standard issue!

Paul writes in verse 11, "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

This is the verse I use to quote every time I got ready to mow the lawn, and I had to pick up the kid's toys out of the yard, "*when I became a man, I put away childish things.*" And this is a verse we'll quote in heaven.

One day we all will reach full maturity - spiritual adulthood. But that won't happen until we get to heaven. Then and only then, will spiritual gifts cease.

"For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known." In the here and now we see dimly.

"*Face to face,*" and "*knowing as I am known*" are phrases that speak of our heavenly experience. Complete knowledge isn't a characteristic of this life.

There's no such thing as spiritual high-def, not now.

Until we get to heaven the reception will always be a little fuzzy. If we had 20/20 knowledge we wouldn't have to walk by faith... *But we don't... and we do.* This is why we need all the supernatural help we can get.

The chapter closes, "*And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*"

As the old song puts it, “Without love you ain't nothing! Without love...” It is the more excellent way!

Chapter 14 begins, “Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts...” Remember, the dove of the Holy Spirit flies on two wings - we need **the fruits of the Spirit** and **the gifts of the Spirit** - both the *gifts* and the *graces*!

There is a Christian denomination that adopted as its official policy toward spiritual gifts the phrase, “Seek not, forbid not.” And they should add, “**and get not!**”

For if you “*seek not you’ll get not.*”

Paul tells us, “Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts.” If you don't desire spiritual gifts, you won't get them!

In Luke 11, Jesus told His disciples, “Ask, and it will be given to you, seek and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you... If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” When it comes to the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit we need to seek, and knock, and ask.

Let's remember that tonight as we study the gifts of prophecy and tongues. These are not just matters we should **believe** - these are also gifts we can **receive!**

And Paul adds, “**especially that you may prophesy.**”

When legendary football coach, Bear Bryant, directed the Alabama Crimson Tide he would observe the team's practices from a tower overlooking the field.

The Bear trusted his assistant coaches and the playbook to direct the team, but when he wanted to address a situation he'd shout down with a bullhorn.

And the gift of prophecy is God's bullhorn.

God is in heaven's tower and He watches us live our lives. The on-field instruction is provided by the Bible and the Holy Spirit, but there are occasions when God wants to address us specifically and personally so He picks up His bullhorn and speaks to us directly.

Prophecy is "**instant inspiration.**" It's like spiritual *texting*. It comes straight from God's keypad to yours. It's direct messaging, extemporaneous communication.

The Hebrew word translated "**prophecy**" means "**to bubble up like a fountain, or tumble forth.**" The gift of prophecy is a message prompted by God's Spirit that flows *from my spirit - through my mind - out my mouth.*

Prophecy is a spontaneous, ecstatic utterance. God puts His words in my mind, and I speak them.

My mouth becomes God's mouthpiece. Amos 3:8 declares, "**A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken! Who can but prophesy?**" God's Spirit most often speaks to us in a still, small voice, but the gift of prophecy is compared to a lion's roar!

Verse 2, "**For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.**" The rest of Chapter 14 is going to contrast prophecy and tongues.

Understand first, prophecy is a message *from God to man*, while tongues is *man talking to God*.

In hyper-Pentecostal circles often a tongue is followed by a supposed interpretation - *something like, "Thus says the Lord, listen to me..."* It's as if the utterance in tongues is God speaking to the group.

But this can't be. Tongues is never God speaking to man. It's man speaking to God. Paul is clear, *"He who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God..."* It could be the supposed interpretation of the tongue was actually a prophecy from God, but if that's true the tongue remained uninterpreted. *Tongues is man speaking to God, not God speaking to man.*

"But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men." Most people assume prophecy is *"foretelling the future,"* but a word of prophecy may or may not contain a predictive element.

The purpose of God conveying a word of prophecy is *"edification, exhortation, and comfort..."* It *builds up, stirs up, or cheers up* - whichever is needed most.

For two years Kathy and I struggled to have kids. At a pastor's conference we had attended - on the last weekend of May, 1982 - Kathy requested prayer. In response, one of the ladies prophesied over my wife.

God spoke, *"By this time next year you will have a child."* Zach, my oldest son, was born on May 29, 1983. One year, to the day, the prophecy was fulfilled!

And what kind of effect do you think this prophecy has had on our family? It's certainly **built up** our faith.

And its **stirred up** Zack. What a legacy, knowing your birth was foretold directly by God... And whenever Zach has struggled its **cheered up** his parents to know that God still has a plan and purpose for His life!

This is why Paul says desire spiritual gifts - and especially prophecy - **it builds up, stirs up, cheers up!**

Verse 4 explains why Paul prefers prophecy over tongues. **"He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church."** If no one understands the tongue - *or language* - that's spoken; then it only benefits the person who exercised the gift.

It's like a slice of pizza versus pie for every guy.

Prophecy is God's message to the whole Church. Everyone gets blessed through a word of prophecy.

"I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification."

I personally speak in tongues. It's a wonderful way to praise and worship God. Yet I also know that tongues is the least of all the spiritual gifts; since it's the only gift that doesn't encourage or build up the whole church.

Paul says the guy who speaks in tongues gets blessed, but it doesn't benefit the hearers - unless the tongue is accompanied by the gift of interpretation.

Verse 6, "But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching?" Realize, the gift of tongues is usually a language unknown to both the person speaking it and the person hearing the tongue.

Acts 2, the Feast of Pentecost, was the exception. When the Spirit was first poured out, Jews from around the world had gathered in Jerusalem. When the disciples spoke in tongues the crowds were amazed to hear God being praised in their own native language.

This is not how it happened in Corinth. The church there was not a multilingual congregation. Everyone spoke the same language or languages, so to go to church and speak to the congregation in a foreign tongue made no sense. The goal when the church gathered was to convey truth and biblical thought.

He adds, verse 7, "Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played?" Communication is the key!

"For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle?" Bugles in battle direct the troops, but if the soldiers can't tell if it's blowing charge or retreat; then the army is destined for defeat.

"So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.

There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them is without significance.

Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me." Church is all about clear communication. We convey the truth.

Verse 12, "Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel." The Corinthians were enamored with spiritual gifts, but they had forgotten the purpose of the gifts! Like a baby sucking on a set of car keys - they were missing the point of the car keys!

Church isn't for self-centered entertainment, and language articulation, it's to build up the saints!

Verse 13, "Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret." If you're in a small group of believers - waiting on God in worship - and the Spirit prompts you to speak in tongues - *and no else in the group interprets what you've uttered* - then the person who uttered it needs to pray for the interpretation.

If the tongue never gets interpreted; then no one can benefit from what's being said. *And the purpose for any church gathering is the mutual benefit of all.*

Verse 14, "For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful." Now here Paul helps us understand what it is we're discussing. He sheds insight on

what is the gift of tongues. *"If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays"* - but not my understanding.

The word *"tongues"* means *"languages or dialects."*

The gift of tongues is the Spirit-given capacity to **praise God**, or to **pray to God**, in a language other than my own native tongue, or any language I may have learned. Through the gift of tongues the Holy Spirit liberates me to praise God in a free and uninhibited manner. *I become fluent in worship!*

According to Ethnologue there are currently 6,912 living languages in the world today. Of those 6,912 languages, I know only one - English - and I know very little of it. The English language consists of 800,000 words (that's excluding its 500,000 technical terms).

In an average person's lifetime he or she will only get around to using about 60,000 of those 800,000 words.

And worse, the daily working vocabulary of the average English speaker is only about 7,000 words. That means I use less than 1% of my one language.

This isn't a problem until I start to communicate a thought that's vital to me, and I can't find the right words to use. It's frustrating to *go groping for words*.

There are moments when even the most eloquent person gets caught off guard - *at a loss for words!*

And this *awkward articulation* occurs most often in emotional moments - when our hearts are full of love and joy - or grief and sympathy. You're about to burst with pent-up emotions, but you can't find the right words to express what it is you're feeling deep inside.

I often feel this toward my wife. I try to communicate my love to her, but she's heard, "*I love you*" so often it's become blasé. *I can't afford diamonds, so I'm stuck!*

And this is also a problem in my fellowship with God.

At times I'm awed by His presence, amazed by His love, blown-away by His blessing - and when I want to praise Him most, the speaker becomes speechless.

"I love you" just doesn't cut it!

Humans are like a funnel. The narrow neck is our intellect. The wide base is our spirit. On the spiritual level we're capable of experiencing deep emotions, yet all that our spirit feels has to be channeled through our constricted intellect and very limited vocabulary. Our narrowness chokes off the flow of feelings, and bottles up the emotions. It creates a frustration of expression.

Yet here's where the Holy Spirit comes to our rescue.

God's Spirit knows every language that's ever been spoken. According to 13:1 He's even fluent in the language of the angels. I'm *linguistically limited*, but the Holy Spirit is not. Therefore the Spirit can plant words in my mind - words I don't know, but that accurately and articulately express the depths of my heart.

As the words enter my mind, by faith I speak them, believing them to be the Spirit's interpretation of my praise or concern! It's through tongues that I become *free and fluent* rather than *fumbling and frustrated*.

The gift of tongues bypasses my limitations - my mind and vocabulary. Notice how Paul puts it in verse 14, "My spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful."

Harold Horton explains it this way, "The gift of tongues sinks a well into the dumb profundities of the rejoicing spirit, liberating a jet of long-pent ecstasy that gladdens the heart of God and man... Have you never in the presence of Jesus felt inarticulate on the very verge of eloquence?" We need to ask God for this gift.

"What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding." Paul concludes there's a time and a place for using both the gift of tongues and discernible language. You can pray, *or even sing*, both ways.

"Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified." Notice, tongues is called "*your giving of thanks.*" Again, tongues is prayer or praise - it's us speaking to God, not God speaking to us.

And the idea here is that time and place are crucial.

In essence, Paul is saying that the public gatherings of the church are not the place for the gift of tongues.

When the church opened up its meetings to everybody and anybody the "*uninformed*" person (that Paul mentions) is

present. This is either an unbeliever, or a believer who simply doesn't understand the gift.

And if the point of our meeting is to love and minister to this uninformed person; then why would I use a gift that I know he won't understand and can't appreciate?

At CC our public meetings are full of folks just getting started in their Christian life. If I speak in tongues, the novices will either become confused, or think I'm weird.

This is why Paul writes in verse 18, "I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all yet in the church (in the public assembly) I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue."

Paul is letting us know that he spoke in tongues more than anyone, yet he realized the gift wasn't for the public gathering of the church. Apparently, Paul understood tongues to best be practiced in a person's private devotional life, or in a small group of informed believers - not in the public gatherings of the church where he could run the risk of confusing someone.

He says in verse 20, "Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature." In other words, spiritual gifts and common sense go together. A baby only cares about himself. And this is how some Christians behave.

Being spiritual is being sensitive to the setting.

Verse 21 is where the text gets tricky.

Paul writes, "In the law it is written (and he quotes from Isaiah 28:11): "With men of other tongues and other lips I will

Speak to this people; and yet, for all that, they will not hear Me," says the Lord."

Verse 22, "Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe."

At first Verse 22 seems to contradict the verses that precede, and the verses that follow. *I thought Paul had established that tongues were for informed believers, but here we're told there's a sign to unbelievers?* The key here is to understand the context of Isaiah 28.

The Prophet Isaiah had predicted an invading army would sack Jerusalem. Invaders would speak a foreign language. Thus, when the Jews heard an unknown tongue being spoken in their streets it would be a sign that judgment had come. Thus, for them, tongues was a sign to unbelievers - *but it was a sign of judgment!*

So when an unbeliever comes into a public gathering, and hears someone speak in tongues, it's a sign of judgment. *He or she doesn't understand the things of God.* You've heaped judgment on them before they've even had an opportunity to hear of God's love.

Why condemn them, before you try to bring them in?

But that's what you do, when someone speaks in tongues in this setting. The unbeliever's uncomfortable reaction is proof of their unfamiliarity with the things of God. It's a sign of their alienation from God.

Verse 23, "Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in

those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind?" The fact they freak out over the tongues, and think you're crazy, is proof they're unfamiliar with the things of the Spirit... But is that the first impression you want to make - *highlight their ignorance* - or do you want to build a bridge that'll reach out with God's love?

Don't scare them, before you try to reach them!

"But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you."

Though tongues is confusing to an unbeliever, prophecy is *clear, and compelling, and convicting*.

In the public gatherings of the Church the gift of prophecy is preferable to tongues. This is the reason we stress Bible teaching in our public assemblies. *What is the Bible, but prophesy that's been penned?*

As does impromptu prophecy, the Bible also *builds up, stirs up, cheers up*. When a service is dominated by tongues a few people get blessed, but when we teach the Scripture everyone walks away encouraged!

Verse 26, "How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification."

Apparently the Church at Corinth loved to meet in small groups, that had an informal structure where everyone

participated... you could come with a short teaching, or a revelation, or a song of praise, etc, etc.

It was a kind of a **spiritual free for all** - and that would've been okay if it had really been "for all." But instead of "for all" the meetings were often used by a few haughty folks as a platform to show-off spiritually.

The meetings in Corinth needed *some* structure, and *some* discernment, and *some* restraint - and **a whole lot of love!**... First, Paul adds the structure, verse 27...

"If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret."

I've attended Charismatic meetings where everyone present started speaking and singing in tongues simultaneously. It became a concert of tongues. *Yet according to our passage that's not a biblical practice.*

Paul says those who speak in tongues should each take a turn. Then each person who uses the gift should be followed by an interpretation of that tongue.

"But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God."

And if there's no one present who can interpret the tongues; then we should cease using the gift!

Notice though a couple of points here... **First**, the person with tongues has the on/off switch. When you speak in tongues the Spirit gives you utterance, but you still control the volume, reverb, and mute button.

I remember one misguided friend who was standing next to a co-worker where he was employed. He said suddenly he got the urge to speak in tongues, and just blurted it out. It scared his poor co-worker to death...

But then my friend had the audacity to blame his impulsiveness and lack of discretion on the Lord. He said, "*just couldn't help it! The Holy Spirit made me!*"

This is not what Paul is saying. The Holy Spirit doesn't *force* you to speak. He *enables* you to speak, but you need to supply the sensitivity to the situation.

Too many times a beautiful meeting of believers has been interrupted by an errant burst of tongues.

Jumping ahead to verse 32, Paul says of the gift of prophecy, "*the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.*" This also applies to the gift of tongues.

Verse 29, "*Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.*" Understand, the gift of prophecy, as with all the spiritual gifts, is subject to human error.

In Jeremiah 14:14 the prophet says, "*And the LORD said to me, 'The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart.'*"

Hopefully, people who prophesy *deliberate deceit* are few and far between, but we all can be *self-deceived*.

Often well-meaning believers get worked up into an emotional lather, and mistake their own imagination for a

message from God. This is why prophecies need to be judged. People have made major life decisions on what they thought was a prophecy - *which wasn't*.

We would all be wise to put the prophecy to the test.

*Does it stack up to Scripture? **Has it been confirmed to you by the same Spirit who gave it to him?***

1 Thessalonians 5:19–21 provides us the balance, "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. (but) Test all things; hold fast what is good."

Verse 30, "But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." Whenever someone speaks in the public gathering of the church, or in a small group, it needs to be done in a controlled and orderly manner.

Each person should show restraint and take a turn.

The idea of our gathering is to learn from each other and be uplifted - not show-off in front of each other.

"For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints." The very first time you see the Holy Spirit in the Scripture is Genesis 1:2, *and what is He doing? He brings order out of chaos!*

Where there's no order, people get hurt.

You've heard of folks being stampeded at a soccer match. There was no crowd control. And this can happen in a church.

Where there's no order needs go unmet. People get neglected if there's no organization.

God is into order because He loves people.

And speaking of order... Verse 34 tells us, "Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak..." Remember, Paul has already qualified this comment. In 1 Corinthians 11:5 he mentioned women praying and prophesying in church.

Apparently, this was not an absolute prohibition. It doesn't mean a woman should never open her mouth in church. Again, it comes back to time and place.

It could be that in regards to the vocal gifts the ladies in the church were getting carried away, and were usurping the authority of the male leaders. The Corinthian women needed to remember what Paul had said earlier - in the church and home the men should *lovingly lead* and the women should *faithfully follow*.

This is why he adds in verse 34, "but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church."

Paul is asserting that angry and argumentative sisters are a blight on a church. Again, he isn't talking about proper participation - praying and prophesying. He's referring to rebellion. Which would be shameful behavior not just for women, but also for men.

Verse 36, "Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached?"

Paul figures some of the Corinthians will buck his instructions. Here he backs them down in advance.

The Church at Corinth didn't hold an exclusive claim on the truth. Corinth wasn't the birthplace of the Bible.

The Church in Corinth, as well as every other church is to be subject to the truth that Jesus passed down to the Apostles, and is now contained in the NT.

This is the truth that applies to all churches in all generations. **No church is exempt from biblical truth!**

Paul closes Chapter 14, "If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord." Never doubt Paul's recognition of what he wrote. He knew he was penning sacred Scripture.

So much so, that he doesn't hesitate to put down his detractors in no uncertain terms. He writes to tell them, "But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant."

Finally, he sums up what's been his theme throughout Chapter 14, "Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order."

Yes, chaos is our enemy, and order is important, but Paul also says, "*let all things be done.*" We need to give opportunity for the Holy Spirit to work in these ways. There needs to be room in the life of a church for spiritual gifts - *tongues, and especially prophecy.*